

House Agriculture Committee
2:00 pm - Room 307
Rep. Neal Nitz, Chair

Tuesday, May 5, 2005
SB 225 (S-2)

Representative Nitz and Committee members,

Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of Senator Cameron Brown to his SB 225 (S-2). I am Jeanne Laimon, Legislative Director for Senator Brown.

Michigan agriculture adds \$37 billion to the state's economy annually, making it the state's second-largest industry. The state also leads the nation in the production of eight crops and ranks fifth or higher in 34 crop categories. *Of this \$37 billion, \$700 million is attributed to the Ag tourism industry. (Includes: farm markets, farmers' markets, U-Pick operations, cider mills and the wine industry. The wine industry alone generates \$75 million). The Ag tourism industry has seen a 22% increase in direct market sales since 1997.*

Many of the businesses in rural areas center on agricultural tourism, processing, and production. These businesses are often inhibited by burdensome governmental rules and regulations.

Senate Bill 225 (S-2) would establish an agricultural tourism zoning advisory commission within the Department of Agriculture to examine the effects of local zoning on agricultural tourism. The commission would undertake studies to submit a report on agricultural tourism promotion to the governor and legislative committees.

The agricultural tourism zoning advisory commission within the Department of Agriculture would do the following:

1. The commission will be charged with submitting a report to the Governor and the Committees of the Senate and House of Representatives (with primary responsibility for agricultural issues, tourism issues, and local zoning issues) that includes:
 - a discussion of the effects of local zoning on agricultural tourism;
 - model local zoning ordinance provisions to promote agricultural tourism;
 - recommendations concerning the use of logo signage to promote agricultural tourism; and
 - recommendations for other measures to promote agricultural tourism.
2. The commission would have a little more than a year from the time this legislation is enacted to submit their report to the Governor and legislative committees with primary responsibility for agricultural issues, tourism issues and local zoning issues.
3. Commission will be made up of:
 - Three individuals representing agricultural tourism enterprises;
 - Two individuals representing local government;
 - One individual representing Travel Michigan division of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation; and
 - One individual representing the Department of Agriculture
4. MDA director would appoint the commission members.

Commission members would have to be appointed within 60 days after the bill's effective date, and would serve for the life of the Commission.

Commission members would have to serve without compensation but could be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties.

SB 225 (S-2): includes two minor changes. The first change adds companion animals to the definition of agricultural tourism, and the second change occurred in the description of the commission report. The commission must also provide recommendations on removing barriers to the industry in addition to industry promotion.

Thank you.